

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Ivan Kostov of Bulgaria and an Exchange With Reporters in Sofia November 22, 1999

Prime Minister Kostov. I have just asked the President to say a few words before he goes out of the Council of Ministers. He was kind to respond, and I thank him for that.

President Clinton. Well, first, I want to say again how pleased and honored I am to be in Bulgaria and how strongly I support and admire the political, economic, and military reforms that the Government has undertaken and how grateful I am for the support that Europe and the United States received during the recent difficulties in Kosovo.

I think it is very important for the United States to support Bulgaria's aspirations for political, economic, and military integration into the West and to support the Stability Pact and the economic and political revitalization of all of southeastern Europe.

I would like to make one other point, which is that I am especially grateful for Bulgaria's policy and history of tolerance and cooperation among different groups of people within this

country. If that had been the policy of Serbia in these last 10 years, we would be living in a very different and better time.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

Q. [Inaudible]

President Clinton. No, that did not come up. But we talked generally about the importance of doing things that would be economically beneficial to Bulgaria. I would remind you, my Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Daley, was here just a few weeks ago for an economic conference. And we are moving ahead with a whole set of plans, which I hope will be highly beneficial to Bulgaria economically. But we did not discuss the specific question you asked.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:50 p.m. at the Council of Ministers Building. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to the People of Bulgaria in Sofia November 22, 1999

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President Stoyanov, Prime Minister Kostov, Mayor Sofianski, the people of Bulgaria, I thank you for this wonderful, wonderful welcome. I also want to thank this young student, who must have been so nervous, Boryana Savova. If she is a representative of the young people of Bulgaria, your future is in very good hands.

I am honored tonight to be here with my daughter, three Members of the United States Congress, and a distinguished group of Americans. We thank you for this welcome. We thank all the musicians who performed, all the people who worked so hard to put this wonderful crowd together.

And I would like to say a special word of thanks to the young woman who sang so magnificently both the national anthems of Bulgaria and the United States.

I am very proud to be the first American President to visit Bulgaria—a free Bulgaria. I am proud to stand in this place where voices were silenced for too long. Here are these tens of thousands of people, exercising your freedom with dignity and pride.

We are here tonight because of what you did 10 years ago this month, when change swept through Nevsky Square. Students, never before allowed to express their opinions, demanded free elections now. Writers, imprisoned just a few weeks before, led chants of *demokratiya*. Grandparents, never allowed to worship with their children, said prayers in public, in the shadow of this great cathedral. What a wonderful moment that was. What a wonderful thing it said to the rest of the world about the heart of Bulgaria.